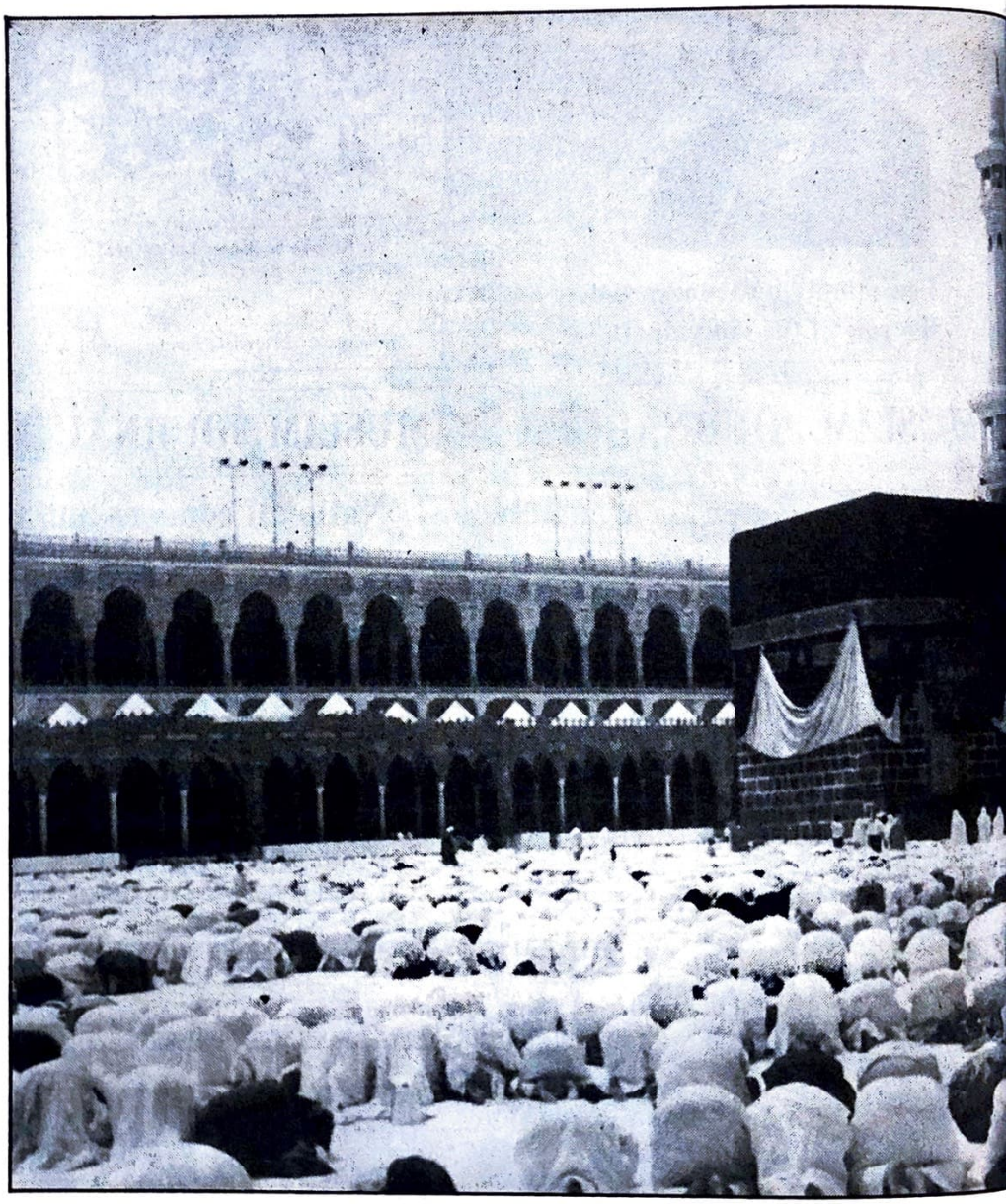
ideas

God and



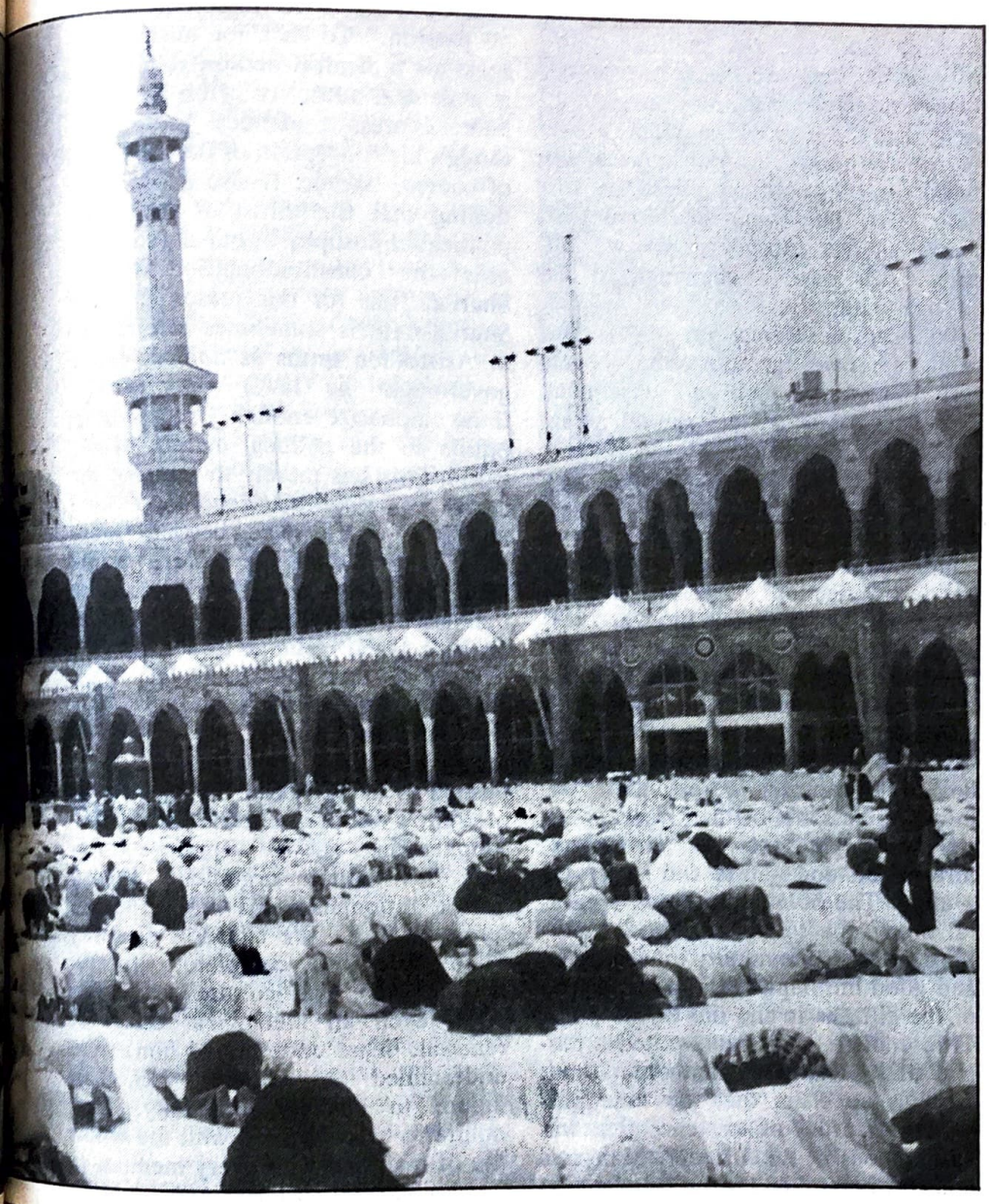
The question of authority is the pivotal problem of all political thought. The present crisis of legitimacy in the world of Islam has thus made the science of politics the main focus of the Muslim's attention. Today, Muslim thinkers are wrestling anew with the problem of devising a system of governance that would represent,

'GOD, ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT *political* figures in Western history, is dying.' With this devastating insight begins a modern treatise on the crisis of legitimacy in the western societies. The dramatic prose continues: 'The event, then is *not simply theological*. With a few lapses in liberalism, or even radicalism, God has been a leading conservative in Judaeo-Christian society. His death not only means empty churches and bereft individuals but also marks the rending of the social fabric.' (Michael Harrington: *The Politics at God's Funeral*, New York, 1983; italics are mine.)

A few odd centuries of secularism notwithstanding, it appears from the records of history that man has always sought to conduct the affairs of his world on the basis of the order existing in the heavens. Historically, every human society has tended to view itself as a replica of the cosmos of its ideology and has believed it to embody, in every meaningful sense, a transcendental truth which is its own, so to speak. The function of political thought, then, is to provide a theory of governance that secures the representation of this special societal truth both *existentially* and *transcendentally*. The problem of representation therefore is not a simple issue of *method*, of deciding the optimum number of seats in a cabinet or of devising adequate electoral procedures as it were. No, along with these methodological considerations, representation is also concerned with *meaning*; with the transference of the symbolic at its most sacred to the realm of the practical. Societies have to be represented existentially because practical constraints make it impossible for them to function politically other than through a system of delegation. However, without the representation of their transcendent truth, they are not able to function politically either and this, in fact, is what the modern jargon 'crisis of legitimacy' hides: the failure of the symbolic transference. Representation of the transcendent truth, thus, is the *sine qua non* of a political order. Since, with some notable exceptions, the Transcendent has always been associated with the idea of God in human history, it is but natural that theological and political speculations are found interwoven in the history of human thought. God and governance form a single chapter of the story of human civilisation.

Though we know very little of the actual political theory of the earliest human civilisations, Egypt and Mesopotamia, to embark on any generalising adventure, whatever we do know points towards an intimate marriage of theology and politics in the thought of the ancient man. Common to both

Governance



existentially as well as transcendentally, the Community of the faithful that recognizes the sovereignty of God. **S Parvez Manzoor** explores the interface of theology and political theory in the history of human thought and relates it to the curent debate in the Muslim world.

these civilistion was the idea of a universal monarchy, the institution of a single and absolute government, which prevails in four corners of the earth and for all times to come. The concept of dominion over the world, thus, comes to the forefront during this period of human history. Obviously, the monarchical idea of the ancient Orient is founded on the religious principle, though it goes further by uniting the sphere of the human and the divine in the person of the sovereign. Essential also to this ideal of divine-kingship was the conception of *mediation*: the monarch was a mediator between mortals and the transcendent. However, whereas in Mesopotamia, the king as the mediator belongs to the human plane, the Egyptian monarch was supposed to be an incarnation of the diety, an actual god descended among men. Accordingly, the attitude to life was different in the two civilisations. 'In Mesopotamia', states Sabatino Moscati, '(there existed) the constant anxiety, the fear lest the supreme will should remain uncomprehended and the harmony between the two spheres should be marred; in Egypt, a happy serenity, due to resignation to the predestined order which descends from on high without any break in the transmission.'

Though the political history of the ancient Near East evolved on its own course, with the Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians and Egyptians laying its foundation, the Hittites, Aramaeans and Israelites acting as catalysts and the Persians synthesising and enjoying the fruits of this remarkable cultural symbiosis, it is to the Hebrews that we owe the most radical and original religious ideas. Obviously, we are now entering 'the age of the prophets' and a Muslim cannot view this period historically, ie merely from the standpoint of secularised history; he has to interpret it symbolically as well. It needs therefore pointing out that the truth of the prophets, which was revealed at this time of history, is the truth of God according to Islam. Indeed, Islam accepts this truth as its own and regards these prophets as 'the prophets of Islam'. The monotheistic phase of the Near Eastern history has special significance for us Muslims, because it is part of our own living tradition. In fact, even in our contemporary search for answers to the problem of political authority, 'the truth of the prophets' forms the principal source of guidance. Everything that will be said on the nature of the prophetic perception and the prophetic teachings later on, thus, holds true for the Qur'anic message as well - with the significant qualification that the God of the Qur'an is infinitely more universal and transcendent than the Hebrew diety that we encounter in the Jewish Bible. Be that as it may, it must also be expressed that the non-scriptural, phenomenological reading of the history of monotheism, as will be attemped briefly in the following paragraphs, in no way diminishes the prophetic truth.

The dominant idea of the prophetic teaching, no doubt, was that of a *transcendent* and *unique* God - the

essence of monotheism. God of the prophets is, philosophically speaking, a pure being, unqualified and ineffable. He is the source of all values. Consequently, and it has been remarked quite often, the prophetic perception *devaluated* all concrete and natural phenomena. In the sphere of material culture, it advanced the principle of iconoclasm and led to the banishment of all imagery from the realm of worship. Even social order, in the final resort a creation of God himself, comes under the assault of the iconoclastic perception of monotheism. 'Nowhere else', contends H Frankfort, 'do we meet this fanatical devaluation of the phenomena of nature and the achievements of man: man, virtue, social order - in view of the unique significance of the divine.' Even the ancient idea of cosmic harmony does not escape unscathed from the radicalised perception of monotheism. The harmony of the cosmos is reduced to nothing in the face of the will of the Omnipotent God. Or, it would be more true to say that the prophetic consciousness replaced the idea of cosmic phenomena with the perception of *history*. Rudolph Bultmann elucidates it as such: 'If the *world as nature is the sphere of God's sovereignty* and the stage for man's labours and the working out of his destiny, that means in the last resort it is regarded as *history*, rather than *nature*.' (my emphasis). The same idea, of nature - creation - being the realm of God's sovereignty, is interpreted *politically* in A.A. Maududi's modern theory of the Islamic state.)

The most notable consequence of the monotheistic conception of the world was devalourisation of the political authority. The acceptance of the transcendent God as the ground of all being introduced a principle of truth which was independent of any human order. In fact, the truth, or word, of God came to stand in opposition to the truth, or word, of man. Thus, the affirmation of the transcendence of the diety dissolves all *political* bonds between man and God. The king of Israel now does not exercise the function of a mediator as was the case with earlier Near Eastern civilisations: he is infinitely inferior to the exalted God to have any such pretensions. Ultimately, of course, the dedivinization of the natural sphere of politics was responsible for, in its Christian milieu, of the dichotomization of religion and politics as well. The idea of a universal God, after all, has its logical correlate the idea of a universal community of mankind. Without the Law, Christianity could only conceive of such a community beyond all the attributes of a political, indeed civil, society, and participating in some mystical way in the Christian *logos*. Obviously, the moral principle advanced by monotheism contains within itslef germs which lead to the death of politics; for, the moral authority of God and the political authority of the king are based on contradictory principles. It is not accidental, then, that the Hebrew kingdom, as we learn form histoy, did not make much mark on the political scene of the Near East. However, the moral teachings of the prophets, as we all know, still pose a challenge to all political authority.

Political philosophy proper, it has been remarked far too often, began with the Greeks and all subsequent expression of it, at least in the western culture, is a footnote to Plato's *Republic*. There can be no doubt that compared to the Near East, whose political thought is in reality theopolitical, Greek philosophy represents political reflection at its purest. The foremost trait of Greek thought is its humanism: it is man-centred rather than theocratic as is the case in other civilizations of the ancient world. For instance, Plato's often-quoted phrase 'A polis is a man written large', beautifully captures the essentially anthropophilic spirit of the Greek political theory. In its heyday, Greek culture understood nature and society as a unity. The *polis* represented a natural order, the sole source of its authority was the community inhabiting it, and good life implied the participation of the citizens in the life of the polis. True enough, polis represented a cosmic truth - harmony and order - but there is no claim that the state possessed an order of existence that was autonomous of its citizenry. Man as a political being, the citizen, also makes his debut in human thought in the writings of the Greeks.

There is very little theological reflection in Greek political philosophy - though Aristotle actually came very close to sharing the monotheistic political sentiment when he annunciated in his *Metaphysics*: 'The world does not have the will to be ruled badly; the rule of many is not good, one be the Lord.' Instead, the Greeks advanced the notion of *nomos*, law, custom and norm, which heralds the beginning of constitutionalism in the history of political thought. In *Politics* Aristotle expounds the nomocratic rationale as such: 'He who commands that law should rule may thus be regarded as commanding that God and reason alone should rule; he who commands that man should rule adds the character of the beast. Appetite has that character; and high spirit, too, perverts the holders of office, even when they are the best of men. Law [as the pure voice of God and reason] may thus be defined as "reason free from all passion." To seek for justice is to seek for a neutral authority; and law is a neutral authority.' (Ibn Khaldun, later, expressed identical sentiments, though his conception of the Law was, of course, Islamic. It also needs mentioning that the thrust of the Sunni political philosophy in our days is towards the constitutionalism of the Shari'a. It is for this reason that the Shari'a-state is sometimes referred to in Aristotlian terms as *nomocracy*, ie government by law.) One cannot, thus, emphasize enough Greek contribution to the political culture of the world. One has merely to think of the ideas of politics, democracy and nomos - which have become more fully integrated in the culture of the West than anywhere else - to realise the indebtedness of later generations to these gifted Hellenes.

Rationalism, naturalism, humanism and other suplendid traits of Greek political thought apart, it displays serious limitations - limitations of reason pushed to its extremes. In his critique of Plato's utopia, ruled by the philosopher-king, Lewis Mumford presents his counter-argument against Greek rationalism in very eloquent terms as such: 'We can now see why Plato failed so completely to regenerate his own culture or to lay down even an ideological basis for renewal. What undermined him, what undermined the Greeks, was their failure to embrace humanity: their failure to be concerned with the whole life of man and with every member of human society, to address the soldier, the sailor, the craftsman, the farmer, and to give hope and faith to the common man in every region. Plato's message was addressed solely to his class and his culture. It called for a radical re-orientation to life, and yet it left the chief sacred cows of his world, slavery and class rule, contentedly chewing their cud. Pride of family, pride of city, pride of intellect were all self-defeating. Failing to embrace humanity, the philosophers could not even save themselves.'

With the exception of Islam, perhaps no other tradition is as much involved with the issue of God and governance as is Christianity. Or, it would be more true to say, Christian

thought remained singularly preoccupied with the formulation of a theocratic order till it reached the cul-de-sac of secularism and retracted, loosing perhaps all political prestensions in this daunting experience. Whatever be the case, we would do well to remember that despite its humanism, which is the progenitor of modern secularism, all political thought in Christianity is theological in essence. Needless to say that it is not our goal to give a summary of the political debate and reflection inside Christianity, from the Caesar-God episode in the Scripture to Luther's apology for 'religion of the state', in order to impress upon our readers the reciprocity of theology and political science in the Christian tradition. No, such an undertaking is beyond the level of our capacity and ambitions, just as it is beyond the possible limits of this essay. However, it is our intention to bring home the point of the unity of theology and political theory by examining the genesis of the Christian trinitarian theology in its political settings. Trinitarian theology which is supposed to have arisen out of Christological reflections, it would become quite evident, has very initmate connections with the political speculations, indeed with concrete historical situation, of its formative days.

The original historical milieu in which Christianity grew to become a universal church was that of the Roman Empire. It possessed its own political theology and was ruled by a semi-divine Emperor. From Aristotle through Philo to early Christian thinkers, a unitarian theo-political doctrine had been elaborated which rested on the idea of the parallel constructions of imperial monarchy and divine world monarchy. Eusebius of Caesarea (modern Kayseri, in Turkey), who was impressed by the coincidence of the appearance of Christ with the pacification of the Empire by Augustus, saw in the establishment of the *Pax Romana* some reflection of the mystery of the Kingdom of God. Eusebius also construed the triumph of the Christian Emperor Constantine as the establishment of a divine monarchy: 'the one *basilieus* on earth represents the one God, the one King in Heaven, the one Nomos and Logos.'. Christianity, in other words, had made peace with the Empire, which seemed to represent the Christian cosmos in some way, and had even recognized the Emperor as the representative of God.

Christological controversies, which were a cause of serious tension within

the monotheistic faith, brought this harmony, this marriage of cnoveniance between the Roman Empire and the Christian Church, to a close. For instance, when their philosophically minded pagan opponents accused them of not taking their monotheism seriously, and of having in Christ 'a second god', Christians were forced to settle this point doctrinally. The Christological debates that ensued, as is well known, culminated in the 'Arian Heresy'. The trinitarian models of godhead that were advanced to 'solve' that 'mystery' broke the uneasy unity of theology and political theory, of the parallel construction of imperial monarchy and divine world monarchy, that had earlier been worked out in Eusebius' theology. Tinitarian theology, thus, seriously challenged the monotheistic ideology on which was founded the conception of the emperor as the representative of one God. Interestingly from our point of view, the Emperor and court theologians sided with the unitarian Arius. After the 'victory' of the trinitarian theology, thanks mainly to Athansius' resistance and westerner's support, the speculations about the parallel order of monarchies in heaven and on earth became meaningless and could not be pursued any further.

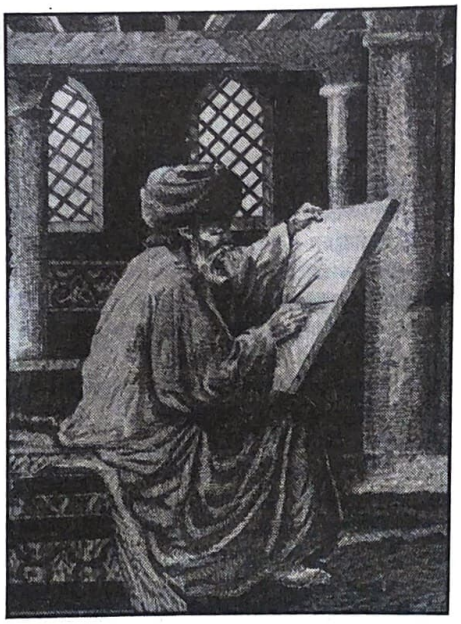
Trinitarianism, which in the culture of Islam has been judged - justly - from the purely theological vantage-point as a form of *shirk*, it appears, represents an unresolved tension between deeply committed political and ideological 'vested interests' of Christendom as well. Though the political metaphor of monarchy did not disappear from the Christian societal scene, just as the true 'representation of God' was transferred to the person of the Pontiff, 'the vicar of Christ', the language of divine monarchy did assume a new meaning. Gregory of Nazianzus, for instance, declared that whehereas it was true that the Christians believed in the divine monarchy, they did not believe in *the monarchy of a single person in the godhead*. Instead, he declared, they believed in triunity - 'and the triunity of God had no analogue in creation'. In clear political language, it announced that the single person of the imperial monarch could not represent the triune unity of godhead. It probably further suggested that the emperor represented the triune god jointly with the Pope and the nobility. The triune model of the Christian cosmos, thus, postulated equal partnership between the state (Emperor), the Church (Pope) and the civil society (the Nobility).

Obviously, the idea of a trinitarian god could not be translated into any models of governance. Some literalists tried to introduce it in actual political practice, but their attempts proved out to more tragic - or comic - than earnestmided. For instance, in the reign of Constantine IV (668-685 CE), the army demanded of the emperor that he install his two brothers as co-emperors to represent divine-trinity on earth. Eric Voegelin comments: 'It

sounds more like a joke than like a serious suggestion; and it was perhaps inevitable that in the course of the events the second and the third persons of the imperial trinity got their noses cut off.' Whatever the sad end of trinitarian politics, the interface of theology and political theory endured for a long time in Christian thought - and it is still not dead as the 'liberation theology' movement in Latin America clearly proves. The convergence of the ideas of God and governance is an enduring testimony of human thought and even other cultures, such as the Indian about which we have said nothing, have produced indigenous versions of 'political theology'. Space does not permit us, however, to carry on even this summary historical and comparative survey any further. The recognition of the common human tendency to envisage the collectivity of the society as representing some transcendental truth and of the universal strivings of the political society to base its models of governance on its conceptions of the Absolute must serve as the necessary background to the discussion about our own culture, to which we turn now.

Traditional Islamic thought, as compared to actual Muslim history, has produced two models of governance based on two different conceptions of authority. Before we elaborate on them, it would be proper to emphasise, that not only in practice but even in theory, these almost sacrosanct notions of political authority are being challenged, modified and even superseded in recent Muslim thought. Moreover, though these two versions of the Islamic political theory were originally related to the division of Sunnism-Shi†ism, subsequent historical developements, especially recent trends in actual praxis, have blurred this distinction. With these reservations in mind, we may now describe the actual positions of the Muslim theorists. The doctrine of the Caliphate, which is considered to be the specifically Sunni conception of the Islamic rule, states that the link between God and man is the Divine Law. The Muslim *Umma*, the historical community of the Prophet(S), is a community based on the Divine Law, the Shari'a. Moreover, in its historical developement the Umma is ensured of divine guidance through the infallible authority of the *ijma*. The function of rule, exercised through the insitution of the Caliphate, is upholding of the Law. Divine Law, and not the Caliph, thus, is 'sovereign' - inasmuch as this concept has any meanings in an Islamic context - in the Sunni system of governance. Nonetheless, even to such a schematic view of the Sunni theory, there are a number of caveats. First of all, we have to recognize that even in the Sunni community there did not exist a single, universally accepted theory of the Caliphate. Al-Mawardi's doctrine, which is supposed to embody the Sunni theory, is merely one of a number of Sunni attempts to expound its view on this form of Islamic rule. As a matter of fact, one may even agree with Professor Gibb when he claims that 'the very basis of Sunni thought... excludes the acceptance of any one theory as definitive and final.

The Shi'i doctrine of the Imamate, on its part, holds that the institution of the Imama is obligatory by revelation and not by reason (a view even



held by some Sunni jurists like Al-Mawardi and Al-Baghdadi), that the Imam - and not the Umma - is the infallible source of authority after the Prophet, that the Imam is divinely appointed and that he can only belong to the House of Ali and the Prophet's daughter, Fatima. Against its *theory* of the Imamate stand the sacred personages of the Twelve *historical* Imams. The actual Imams, rather than any doctrine of the Imamate, are the rallying points of the Shi'i community and form a basis of its semi-autonomous political identity within the House of Islam. Since the occultation of the Twelfth Imam, however, the practical dispute over legitimacy has assumed more of a theoretical character. As in Sunnism, the Shi'i political thought - and praxis - is also in a state of flux and is being enriched by many radical contributions. Only time will tell the real signficance of these developements.

Notwithstanding the emotive appeal and normative authority of the two afore-mentioned doctrines, the greater part of Muslim history, it would be wise to remember, has followed its own, non-ideological and pragmatic, course. Contrary to the prevailing logic that the Islamic doctrines of legitimacy, both Sunni and Shi'i, cannibalise on the state-principle and that the state is forever under siege in a Muslim society, there are good reasons to discard this sweeping non-truth. Not only is the Islamic theory not inconsistent with the state-idea, the historical Muslim temper is not incongenial to 'stateness' either. One of the most astute and incisive western scholars of Islam, H A R Gibbs, came to this realization in connection with his study of the theory of the Caliphate. This is how he perceives the legalistic facade and the inner sanctuary of the House of Islam:

'As is so often the case in Islam, the inner reality is quite other than would appear from the external formulations of the jurists. *Between the real content of Muslim thought and its juristic expression there is a certain dislocation*, so that it is seldom possible to infer the reality from the outer form. Only when both are known can the relationship between them be discerned; and the formula is then seen to be an attempt, *not so much to express the inner principle as it is, but to compress it within a rigid mold in order to serve a legal argument and a partial end.* But at the same time... Muslim thought refuses to be bound by the outward formulae. It exerts a constant pressure, whose influence is to be seen in the unobstrusive reshaping of theory which, beneath an outward inflexiblity, characterizes all branches of speculative activity in Islam, where Islam has remained a living organism. And if necessary, it does not hesitate to overstep the limits of theory and to give independent expression to its sense of realities.' (All emphasis is mine.)

After the Wars of Trial, which left the Community divided and perplexed, there came to exist the real but imperfect world of history, where the jurists' theories could not be implemented. It was here, in this world of sinful subjects and their even more sinful rulers, that a new kind of political order arose, based on pragmatic compromise and the power-principle. It was in this grey world of the possible, away from the white and black of the ideal, that Muslim polity crea-

ted a new kind of state, if by state we may be allowed to mean the framework in which rulers confronted their subjects politically. It was the world of dynastic order, of kings and sultans, of *mulk* and power-politics. It provided stability and order where idealism and utopian piety had created chaos and strife. The solitary genius Ibn Khaldun understood the import of the mulk and the stability of statehood that it provided for the community.

Notwithstanding his rigorous empirical analysis and his insight into the practical nature of politics, however as a Muslim even Ibn Khaldun was a protagonist of the Shar'ia regime and deemed it superior to rational governance because, as he himself annunciates it, 'in rational regimes the conflict between man's rational judgement and his lower impulses is resolved by the threat of physical force; in the regime of Law it is resolved by moral or religious persuasion.' A deeper analysis of the statement would reveal that by paying his allegiance to Law that governs all actions internally, Ibn Khaldun came to renounce the political idea altogether and subsituted it by the moral. Politics and state are needed only when men cannot control themselves; hence coercive power is the gist of governance and rule. Law, the Shari'a, on the contrary is an expression of the Divine Will which is moral; hence its power is not coercive but persuasive. Surely, this amounts to negating the state-principle itself. The convergence of governance with the idea of God not only produces legitimacy for empires, it destroys the very basis of that legitimacy as well. Verily God represents the antithesis of the state-idea. Does this also mean that Islam and statehood, after all, are irreconcilable, based as they are on contradictory principles?

Traditional Islam discoverd that the political expression of Islam was not the essence of it. It was not the ultimate form in which the truth of Islam could be validated. Contrary to the perception of the nascent Muslim community, the universal Islamic civlisation came to the insight that the political represented merely a contingent and the Umma an essential verity of Islam. The God of Islam was a truly transcendent God, God of all mankind and for all time. Indeed, He was immensely greater than all human history which saw the rise and fall of empires and dynasties, Muslim as well as non-Muslim, and, hence, too exalted to be intimately involved with the daily affairs of the Community. Guidance not governance was the essence of God's mercy to mankind. Modern Islam, it appears, is bent upon renouncing the traditionalist legacy, with violence if need be. It craves a much more intimate relationship of theology and political theory and would have, as its were, a direct hand of God in the governance of the Community. It is not accidental that *state* not *Community* has become the focal point of Muslim political reflection and theory today.

Whatever the philosophical, ethical and theological validity of the traditionalist insight about the contingent role of politics in the salvation of the believers, this quasi-abstract reading of history had been instrumental in allowing the Community to grow weaker and fall prey to the might and greed of outsiders. The political and military crumbling of the 'medieval' Muslim civilisation at the first onslaught of western imperialism, so argue modern activists, was a direct consequence of the traditionalist's devaluation of the political. Even so concrete and historical a unit as the Umma, which in its formative history conceived of itself as a virile political community, was appropriated in the traditionalist vision as a transcendent, para-historical abstraction. The current pre-occupation with the political metaphors of Islam, with the definition of the state, the vilaya, the imama, the khilafa, is a clear indication of the rebellion of the modern mind against the traditionalist legacy of personal piety and public quietism; indeed against the very conceptions of truth and salvation which the traditionalist mind held to be the essence of Islam. It further testifies that by reinterpreting its role in terms of political functionalism, the Umma is slowly learning to reassert its historicity as well.

Every political community, we learn from human history, is a *symbolic reality*; it conceives of itself as a representative of some cosmic truth but it exists in the concreteness of time and history. A truly Islamic society, therefore, is one which succeeds in becoming the living embodiment of Islam and whose institutions form a bridge, so to speak, between the transcendence of its eternal symbols and the immanence of its temporal order; or, conversely, which also possesses a sense of reality capable of interpreting the eternity of its symbols in terms of the contingency of its history. In view of the dual nature of the Umma as the symbolic reality of Islam, thus, it is imperative that the political institutions of Islam give representation to the Muslim society existentially as well as transcendentally. No doubt, the traditional Muslim was right in perceiving the Umma to be the 'embodiment' of Islam, both in an existential and in a symbolic sense. Indeed, the symbolic reality of the Umma as a representation of Islam is infinitely superior to any notions of Islam as a political society or state.

However, it is also true that the ideational balance of pre-modern, post-Mongolic societies of Islam was tipped heavily in favour of transcendence, just as their structures and institutions had abdicated political society for the sake of the civil. Nonetheless, to remove this imbalance by putting all the eggs of Islam in the basket of politics as it were, is to tip the scale to the other extreme. Indeed, by making Islam subservient to the creation of a new political order, some expression of contemproary 'revivalism' squarely falls prey to the secularist fallacy. They are a living testimony to the fact that the modern Muslim mind is fast becoming modernist as well. Muslim consciousness, it would appear undeniable to a disinterested observer, is slowly acquiring a secularist dimension of its own, even when the moving rationale behind Muslim activism is adamantally traditionalist. At its extreme, fundamentalism, to use a borrowed and much maligned term, is a child of our age, the age of secularism.

The loss of civil and political morality, which Harrington mourns as the outcome of the western man's secularism, could plague the house of Islam as well, should Homo Islamicus follow in the footstep of the western man in making political salvation as the ultimate aim of his life. Indeed, we cannot be oblivious to this peril because, we have seen, the modern experience is slowly depleting Islamic consciousness of its traditional contents. In its pursuit of a political millennium, the modern Muslim mind, alas, is growing insensitive to the balance of the Prophetic model. The sacred historical Community, however, must not forget the truth of Islam that its founder represented both existentially and transcendentally. The Prophet's Islam, the Umma would do well to recall, was transcedental without being abstract, it was historical without being this-world and it was 'political' without being state-centred. To search for a new model of Islamic governance is to discover God's guidance in the Sunna of the Prophet.